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The
WHITE PINE
SERIES OF
Architectural Monographs
Volume V *Number 1*

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
CONNECTICUT HOUSE

With Introductory Text by
Harold Donaldson Eberlein

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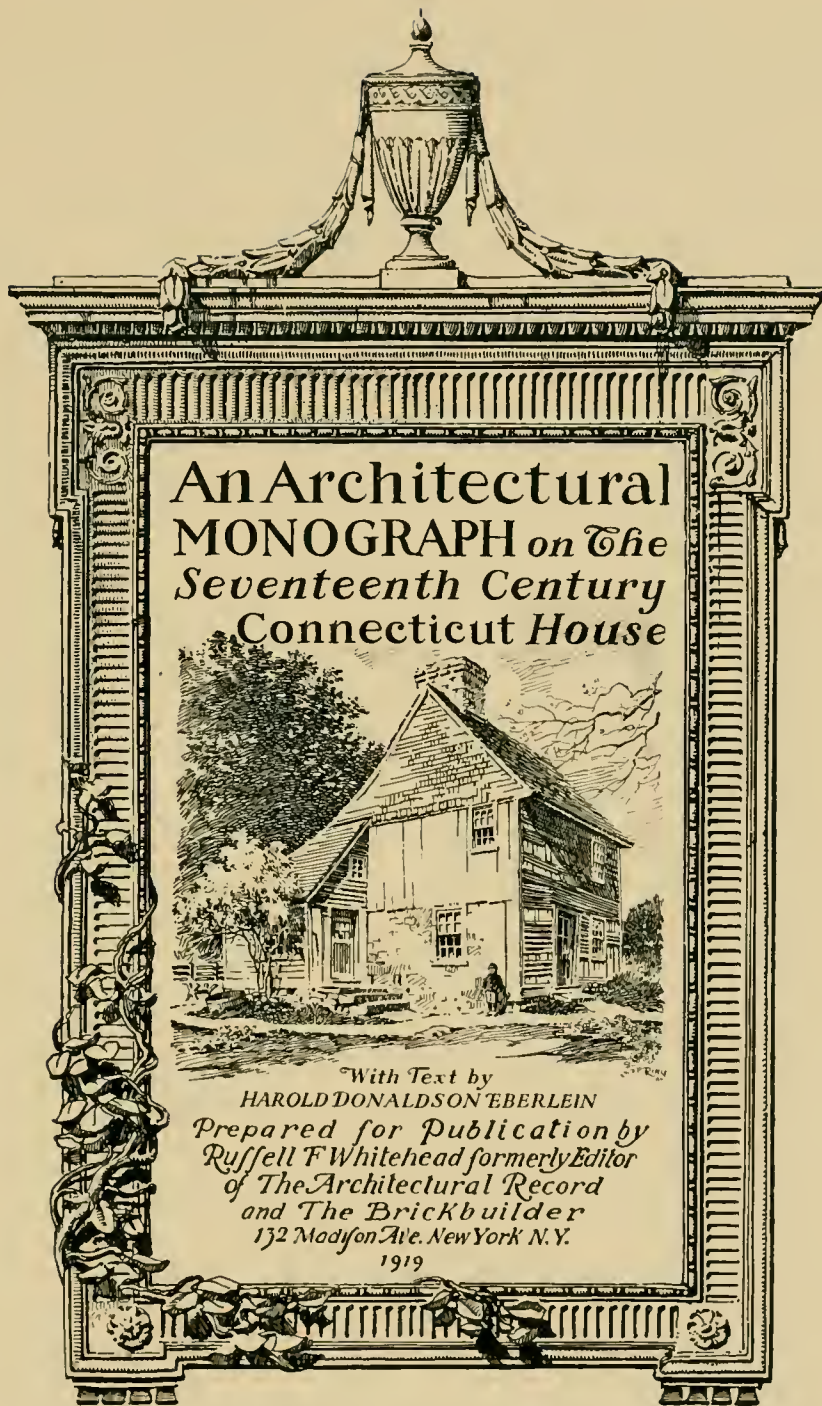
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THE GOLDSMITH HOUSE, BETWEEN GUILFORD AND BRANFORD,
CONNECTICUT. Entrance Detail.

Circa 1700.

THE WHITE PINE SERIES of ARCHITECTURAL MONOGRAPHS

A BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION SUGGESTING THE
ARCHITECTURAL USES OF WHITE PINE AND ITS
AVAILABILITY TODAY AS A STRUCTURAL WOOD

Vol. V

FEBRUARY, 1919

No. 1

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY CONNECTICUT HOUSE

By HAROLD DONALDSON EBERLEIN

Mr. Eberlein needs no introduction, either as an author or as a critic. His articles in "The Architectural Forum," "The Architectural Record," and other architectural magazines are well known, as are his books, "The Architecture of Colonial America" and "The Practical Book of Early American Arts and Crafts," the latter written in collaboration with Abbot McClure.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

WITH apologies to the author of the famous schoolboy Hibernianism, committed in translating into English the opening sentence of Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, we may say that all of early Connecticut was "quartered into three halves." Of these, the first and most anciently settled was the region round about Hartford, including the towns of Windsor and Wethersfield and the tracts bordering thereon. This was in 1636. Not long afterwards—to be historically exact, in 1638—came the New Haven group of settlements, while in 1646 followed the laying out of New London, to which latter sphere of colonizing influence belonged the town of Norwich. There was, it is true, a fourth early plantation (1637) at Saybrook, and on the lands immediately adjacent thereto at the mouth of the Connecticut River; but as this colonizing venture never attained the political nor numerical growth of the "three halves" previously mentioned, and was more or less identified with the Hartford group, we may pass it without further mention here, interesting though it be historically and architecturally, since the houses of the Connecticut River Valley have already been discussed in a previous Monograph of this Series.

Our present concern is with seventeenth century Connecticut houses other than those in the valley settlements, or what is known as the Connecticut Colony, embracing the river towns and their offshoots. That means to say that most of our material is drawn from the New Haven settlement, for, thanks to the gentle incendiary attentions of Benedict Arnold, the burning of New London left but little of the seventeenth century work undestroyed in that city. The other seventeenth century structures in the neigh-

boring country are virtually analogous to the New Haven types or else obviously affected by Rhode Island characteristics. Lest the reader be led to expect too great a diversity between the different local types, it is well to preface our detailed examination by observing that, although the "joints visible in the [early] political structure of Connecticut were faithfully repeated in the architecture of the first century of the colony's existence," the differences are not sharp and are chiefly to be noted in matters of detail in such particulars as resulted from "the constructive preferences of the carpenters and masons who literally founded and built the commonwealth, and who, through their successive apprentices, handed down their different craft traditions." The differences are, however, quite sufficient to make study and comparison both interesting and profitable.

The New Haven sphere of influence embraced the towns to the east and west, and the small settlements for a short distance inland from them—Guilford, Branford, Milford, Stratford, Fairfield and their immediate hinterland. Colonists settled in all of these places within a year or two of the colony's planting. And the men of the New Haven Colony were, all things considered, of more substantial estate than any other body of planters who sat down within the boundaries of the present State of Connecticut. They were such men as Governor Theophilus Eaton, Thomas Gregson, the Reverend John Davenport and Isaac Allerton, all of whom had houses befitting their substance and civic importance, while other men of easy means, as affluence was then reckoned, also erected dwellings by no means contemptible. There is also a sufficient number of the houses built in the

immediately succeeding period to give us a very accurate idea of the average seventeenth century Connecticut dwelling. In discussing them we may, for the sake of convenience, follow Mr. Isham's classification of two closely related types of seventeenth century house—the one built prior to 1670 or 1675, and the other built between these dates and the end of the century. One of the chief items of differentiation between the two was the treatment of the lean-to. In the former type it was generally an

break at the line of junction between the principal mass and the lean-to² (as frequently in the earlier type where the lean-to was a subsequent addition), with a slightly gentler slope thence downward; a buxom stone or brick chimney stack rising from the centre of the roof line, the top of the stack capped "with one or more thin courses, which project like moulded bands," and sometimes also another projection or necking below and distinct from the capping; last of all, the overhang, one of the most interesting features



THE PHILO BISHOP HOUSE, GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT.

Built circa 1665.

independent and somewhat later addition; in the latter it was commonly incorporated in the original plan and erected as an integral portion of the body of the structure.

Both types were approximately the same in the contour of their mass—an oblong rectangular main body containing two floors, with an attic in the steep pitched roof which sloped down in the rear almost to the ground, covering the lean-to, and displayed either one unbroken pitch¹ (as usually in the later type) or else a

from purely architectural reasons and one that vastly contributed likewise to the strongly individual expression of the contour. In the middle of the front was the house door with two windows at each side, while a row of five windows generally filled the front of the second floor, or else there was one window on each side of the door and three on the second floor. From an inspection of the exterior it is possible to form a correct idea of the interior plan. On the ground floor were two rooms, the "hall" or living room,

¹ *Vide* Acadian House, Guilford. Page 8.

² *Vide* Baldwin House, Branford; Walker House, Stratford; and Bishop House, Guilford. Pages 9, 12 and 4.

which in the earliest times served for kitchen also, and the parlor. In the middle of the house, between the rooms, was the great stone chimney structure with a capacious fireplace in each room. The house door opened into a shallow entry or "porch." There, opposite the door and backed up against the masonry of the chimney, a stair of three broken flights ascended to the second floor, where were two chambers, with their fireplaces, corresponding to the plan of the ground floor. A stair back of the chimney led

amination of the remaining seventeenth century houses shows that the foregoing simple plan was closely adhered to almost without exception; and when there were any variations, they were trifling.

The framing was sometimes of hard pine, sometimes of oak, and occasionally both were used. It is worthy of note that the framing is still in admirable condition except where it has been subjected to the grossest neglect and exposed to insidious leaks. The exterior casing of



THE STARR HOUSE, GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT.

Built circa 1665.

from one chamber into the attic. Where the lean-to was a subsequent addition, it contained a kitchen and sometimes a small bed-chamber. A fireplace was added and a flue built up along the back of the original chimney, whose form, above the roof, now became T-shaped instead of rectangular. Above the ground floor of the lean-to there might or might not be a chamber. Where the lean-to, as in the house of the second type, formed a part of the original scheme, its ground plan was the same, but provision was made for second floor chambers, usually on a level with the "hall" and parlor chambers. Ex-

clapboards was of white pine, not infrequently left to the coloring agencies of the weather. Man, far more than time or weather, is to blame for the disconcertingly altered conditions that often confront the visitor who endeavors to visualize the pristine appearance of these old houses. The local carpenter of the nineteenth century, who was not an archæologist nor an antiquary and, unlike his predecessors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, apparently altogether devoid of architectural appreciation, reverence or imagination, was the worst offender. If clapboards were to be renewed, he did not scruple to

saw off brackets and moulded drops or even wholly to conceal overhangs and chamfered girts if it suited his whim and convenience. Nor did he hesitate otherwise to obliterate sundry architectural refinements that constituted no small degree of the ancient and rightful charm of the seventeenth century dwelling. That so much of the original aspect of the houses illustrated still remains is a matter for real gratulation. Successive occupants, through an ill-considered obsession to follow the latest fashion, have also been much to blame for senseless and

enteenth or early eighteenth century when the fashion of low transoms with small rectangular lights (*vide* the door of the Bishop house in Guilford and others) was becoming popular. It is more than likely that new doors and doorways were installed, in many cases, in the early years of the eighteenth century at the same time that leaded casements were abandoned and the window apertures altered for the reception of double hung sashes. As an instance of this may be mentioned the door of the Bishop house in Guilford: the method of panelling, the moulded capping and



THE HYLAND-WILDMAN HOUSE, GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT.

regrettable changes. At their instance the external features that suffered the most conspicuous change were doors, doorways and windows.

The original doors exhibited interesting and distinctive panelling, and the doorways, though severely simple, were well considered in composition and detail. One of the earliest doors and doorways may be seen in the Baldwin house at Branford. The frame is simple but vigorous. While door and frame may not be coeval with the building of the house, they are very early, and the square lights, cut in the heads of the three upper panels, are obviously a later "improvement," probably dating from the late sev-

teenth century when the fashion of low transoms with small rectangular lights (*vide* the door of the Bishop house in Guilford and others) was becoming popular. It is more than likely that new doors and doorways were installed, in many cases, in the early years of the eighteenth century at the same time that leaded casements were abandoned and the window apertures altered for the reception of double hung sashes. As an instance of this may be mentioned the door of the Bishop house in Guilford: the method of panelling, the moulded capping and

(Continued on page 10)



THE HYLAND-WILDMAN HOUSE, GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT. Built 1668.

Showing detail of hewn overhang, chamfered girt
and brackets for post at each side of door.



THE ACADIAN HOUSE, GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT.

Circa 1670.



THE BALDWIN HOUSE, BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT.

Circa 1645.

aberrations of uninspired stock millwork are unpardonable and revolting examples of proprietary vandalism.

All the windows, save those that have escaped the intolerable desecration of recent sashes with large panes, exhibit the double hung sashes with small panes and wide muntins that supplanted the earlier diamond-paned leaded casements in the fore part of the eighteenth century.

Another significant change that seems to have taken place concurrently with the alteration of the windows was the introduction of a cornice and oftentimes also of moulded barge boards. At first there was no cornice and the only attempt at architectural amenity at the eaves seems to have consisted occasionally of cutting away the under side of the projecting rafter ends so that they were perceptibly larger at the outer extremity than where they left the plate. Sometimes the rafter ends were merely boxed in—if such construction was not original, and it does not appear to have been—as in the Bishop house in Guilford; at other times the rafter ends were sawed off and re-

placed by a thin moulded board cornice and the moulding was now and again extended to the embellishment of the barge boards. These mouldings showed great restraint and refinement of profile and are unmistakably of the type belonging to the early eighteenth century. Examples of these refined cornice additions may be seen in the Baldwin house at Branford, the Walker house at Stratford, where the moulding is also run around beneath the overhangs and breaks out to form cappings for the window frames, and in the Hyland-Wildman house at Guilford, where, in addition to the several other features, the moulded embellishment occurs on the

barge boards as well, by way of a special amenity.

Through the towns of the New Haven region considerable variations are to be seen in the use of the overhang. Sometimes it occurs only on the front of the house. Again, it extends around the sides, as in the Hyland-Wildman house. Still again, there is a gable overhang as well as the overhang between the first and second floors, as in the Walker, Tuttle and Goldsmith houses. At

times there is only the gable overhang, as in the Bishop house and the Starr houses in Guilford, while some of the houses, like the Baldwin house and the Acadian house, have no overhang at all. We also find one clearly defined form that is distinctively characteristic of the New Haven locality—the *hewn* as distinguished from the *framed* overhang, the latter belonging more particularly to the Hartford region, the "Connecticut Colony," and to Massachusetts. An admirable example of the *hewn* overhang appears in the Hyland-Wildman house in Guilford. In the framing for these *hewn* overhangs the posts for their whole height are of one stick of timber. The full size—sometimes



Detail of Doorway.

THE BALDWIN HOUSE, BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT.

as much as 15 inches square—occurs in the second floor and from this excess of bulk is *hewn* out the bracket that seemingly supports the overhang. Below the bracket, the post is dressed down to far slimmer dimensions. With this form of overhang the projection is much less than where there is a framed overhang and there are no turned or moulded drops. The girts were often elaborately chamfered on their lower outer edge and stopped with moulded stops, as may be seen by the illustrations of the Hyland-Wildman house.

From considerations of solicitude for the picturesque in architecture, it is to be regretted



Detail of Doorway.

THE PHILLO BISHOP HOUSE, GUILFORD,
CONNECTICUT.

that in many later instances the hewn overhang degenerated into mere lines of slight projection across the faces or ends of houses (*vide* Goldsmith house) and that the hewn brackets and chamfered girts wholly disappeared—a change, however, not at all unnatural in view of the very slight projection originally exhibited by the hewn overhang. Even in its sadly emasculated estate, the overhang has a distinct architectural value. It breaks the depressing monotony of a clapboarded wall, gives an agreeable relief of shadow and imparts a degree of charm that should appeal to the severely practical-minded person in the light of an observation made by a highly successful manufacturer and “captain of industry,” to wit, that “beauty is the most utilitarian asset we possess.” On the same score we may also address a plea to the hard-headed practicality of the case-hardened utilitarian anent the chimneys, which, with their capping and the resultant relief of contour, line and shadow, are well worth perpetuating to-day.

We frequently hear allusions to the feasibility of developing an American type of domestic architecture. It is too much and unreasonable to expect that any one uniform type of American

domestic architecture should ever be arrived at, for we are a mixed people in our varied racial derivations; but it is not too much to expect—rather, it is altogether feasible and logical—that we should hold to and emphasize our historical background by cultivating the types that have grown with the centuries and proved their fitness by long use. The seventeenth century Connecticut type represents a straight, vital and logical process of evolution from English precedent; it expresses locality and racial derivation, and its perpetuation is eminently reasonable and, as proved by centuries of experience, suited to the climate and manner of life of the people.

Another point that commends the early American types to our close attention at this particular time is their simplicity, combined with dignity and adaptability to domestic requirements reduced to the lowest terms. Post-bellum conditions in many places have dictated a far-reaching simplification of domestic *ménage*, and the solution of the problem thus perforce imposed upon us cannot be found in a more appropriate quarter than in the early types that so faithfully reflect the simple but dignified conditions under which our forebears lived.



Detail of Doorway.

THE WALKER HOUSE, STRATFORD, CONNECTICUT.



THE STARR HOUSE, GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT.

Built circa 1665.



THE WALKER HOUSE, STRATFORD, CONNECTICUT.

Built circa 1670.



THE HALE HOUSE, SOUTH COVENTRY, CONNECTICUT.



THE HOLLISTER HOUSE, SOUTH GLASTONBURY, CONNECTICUT.
Built circa 1675.



THE GOLDSMITH HOUSE, BETWEEN GUILFORD AND BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT.

Built circa 1700.

SPECIFICATION CLAUSES FOR A WHITE PINE HOUSE

CLASS 2

HOUSE OF MEDIUM GRADE WHERE QUALITY AND COST ARE EQUALLY CONSIDERED

Prepared by LOUIS ROBERT HOLSKKE

Specification Writer for McKim, Mead & White, Architects

CLAUSE A:

Stock: All white pine used shall be Northern White Pine or Idaho White Pine, known botanically as *Pinus Strobus* or *Pinus Monticola*. It must possess the natural characteristics, viz: Closeness of grain, evenness of fiber, and softness of texture. It shall be thoroughly seasoned and shall be milled to dimensions under the White Pine Standard Grading Rules of the Northern Pine Manufacturers' Association—or Western Pine Manufacturers' Association—or White Pine Association of the Tonawandas.

(Cross out the two which do not apply)

	Northern Pine Manufacturers' Association		Western Pine Manufacturers' Association		White Pine Association of the Tonawandas	
	No. 1 White Pine Timbers	No. 2 White Pine Timbers	No. 1 White Pine Timbers	No. 2 White Pine Timbers	No. 1 White Pine Timbers	No. 2 White Pine Timbers
CLAUSE B: For structural uses the grades shall be as follows:						
Posts and girders.....	No. 1 White Pine Dimension	No. 2 White Pine Dimension	No. 1 White Pine Dimension	No. 2 White Pine Dimension	Thick No. 1 White Pine Barn	Thick No. 2 White Pine Barn
Sills and plates.....	No. 2 White Pine Shiplap or No. 2 White Pine Fencing D. and M. or No. 2 White Pine Common Boards Matched and Surfaced	No. 2 White Pine Shiplap or No. 2 White Pine Fencing D. and M. or No. 2 White Pine Common Boards Matched and Surfaced	No. 2 White Pine Shiplap or No. 2 White Pine Fencing D. and M. or No. 2 White Pine Common Boards Matched and Surfaced	No. 2 White Pine Shiplap or No. 2 White Pine Fencing D. and M. or No. 2 White Pine Common Boards Matched and Surfaced	No. 2 White Pine Barn Boards D. and M.	No. 2 White Pine Barn Boards D. and M.
Joists and rafters.....	No. 3 White Pine Shiplap or No. 3 White Pine Fencing D. and M. or No. 3 White Pine Common Boards Matched and Surfaced	No. 3 White Pine Shiplap or No. 3 White Pine Fencing D. and M. or No. 3 White Pine Common Boards Matched and Surfaced	No. 3 White Pine Shiplap or No. 3 White Pine Fencing D. and M. or No. 3 White Pine Common Boards Matched and Surfaced	No. 3 White Pine Shiplap or No. 3 White Pine Fencing D. and M. or No. 3 White Pine Common Boards Matched and Surfaced	No. 3 White Pine Barn Boards D. and M.	No. 3 White Pine Barn Boards D. and M.
Studding, partition sills and plates, bridging or similar work.....	No. 1 White Pine Lath	No. 1 White Pine Lath	No. 1 White Pine Lath	No. 1 White Pine Lath	No. 1 White Pine Lath	No. 1 White Pine Lath
Rough floors.....	White Pine "C." Select Finishing	White Pine "C." Select Finishing	White Pine "C." Select Finishing	White Pine "C." Select Finishing	Selects Thick and Inch White Pine Finishing or Fine Common Thick and Inch White Pine Finishing	Selects Thick and Inch White Pine Finishing or Fine Common Thick and Inch White Pine Finishing
Sheathing and roof boards.....	White Pine "C." Beveled Siding	White Pine "C." Beveled Siding	White Pine "C." Beveled Siding	White Pine "C." Beveled Siding	No. 2 White Pine Beveled Siding	No. 2 White Pine Beveled Siding
Lath	White Pine "C." Select Finishing	White Pine "C." Select Finishing	White Pine "C." Select Finishing	White Pine "C." Select Finishing	Fine Common Thick and Inch White Pine Finishing	Fine Common Thick and Inch White Pine Finishing
CLAUSE C: For exterior work the grades shall be as follows:	White Pine Factory Lumber	White Pine Factory Lumber	White Pine Factory Lumber	White Pine Factory Lumber	White Pine Factory Lumber	White Pine Factory Lumber
All finished work, moulded or plain, except as below otherwise specified.....	"C." White Pine Flooring Beaded	"C." White Pine Flooring Beaded	"C." White Pine Flooring Beaded	"C." White Pine Flooring Beaded	No. 2 White Pine Mouldings D. and M. and Beaded	No. 2 White Pine Mouldings D. and M. and Beaded
Beveled siding.....	"C." White Pine Flooring	"C." White Pine Flooring	"C." White Pine Flooring	"C." White Pine Flooring	No. 2 White Pine Mouldings or Better D. and M	No. 2 White Pine Mouldings or Better D. and M
Other sidings	No. 1 White Pine Thick Common Lumber	No. 1 White Pine Thick Common Lumber	No. 1 White Pine Thick Common Lumber	No. 1 White Pine Thick Common Lumber	No. 2 White Pine Dressing Thick and Inch or No. 2 Barn White Pine Common Lumber	No. 2 White Pine Dressing Thick and Inch or No. 2 Barn White Pine Common Lumber
Sash, doors and blinds						
Ceiling						
Flooring						
Blocking or work concealed from view.....						

SPECIFICATION CLAUSES FOR A WHITE PINE HOUSE

CLASS 2

HOUSE OF MEDIUM GRADE WHERE QUALITY AND COST ARE EQUALLY CONSIDERED

Continued from page 15

CLAUSE D: For interior finish the grades shall be as follows: All exposed finished work moulded or plain....	{	Linings, backings or work concealed from view	Northern Pine Manufacturers' Association		Western Pine Manufacturers' Association		{	White Pine Association of the Tonawandas
			White Pine "C." Select Finishing		White Pine "C." Select Finishing			
			White Pine "D." Select Finishing or No. 1 White Pine Common Boards		White Pine "D." Select Finishing or No. 1 White Pine Common Boards			
			"C." White Pine Flooring		"C." White Pine Flooring			
			No. 1 White Pine Thick Common Lumber		No. 1 White Pine Thick Common Lumber			
Flooring								No. 2 White Pine Mouldings D. and M.
Blocking								No. 2 White Pine Dressing—Thick and Inch No. 2 Barn White Pine Common Lumber

FOURTH ANNUAL WHITE PINE ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION

A COMMUNITY House, the program for which will be published in the April issue of the Monograph Series, is the subject that has been chosen for the 1919 Competition. A Community House, as its name implies, is the common center and meeting place for the community, containing facilities and equipment for recreation, study and possibly for community agencies. The suggestion has been made that we should construct "Liberty Buildings" as memorials to our soldiers, rather than spend the money for monuments of no usefulness and of questionable artistic merit. In the symbolism of its name, there would be an appeal to the finest idealism of the community, while the building itself would afford the solution of the problems of the "days of adjustment to new conditions."

Subjects of Previous Numbers of

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Vol. I.	No. 1.	Colonial Cottages	Joseph Everett Chandler
Vol. I.	No. 2.	New England Colonial Houses	Frank Chouteau Brown
Vol. I.	No. 3.	Farm Houses of New Netherlands	Aymar Embury II
Vol. II.	No. 1.	Houses of the Middle and Southern Colonies	Frank E. Wallis
Vol. II.	No. 2.	Domestic Architecture in Massachusetts	Julian Buckley
Vol. II.	No. 3.	Early Houses of the Connecticut River Valley	Richard B. Derby
Vol. II.	No. 4.	A Suburban House and Garage	Report of Jury of Award
Vol. II.	No. 5.	Old Woodbury and Adjacent Domestic Architecture in Connecticut	Wesley S. Bessell
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Vol. III.	No. 2.	Early Wooden Architecture of Andover, Massachusetts	Addison B. Le Boutillier
Vol. III.	No. 3.	Old Houses of Newburyport, Massachusetts	Richard Arnold Fisher
Vol. III.	No. 4.	A White Pine House to Cost \$12,500.00	Report of Jury of Award
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